IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 14-15, 18-19, 21, 23, 29-31 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Please amend the remaining claims in accordance with the following rewritten claims in clean form. Applicant includes herewith an Attachment for Claim Amendments showing a marked up version of each amended claim.

1. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner comprising:

a housing;

a removable dust collection module carried by said housing;

a locking mechanism for detachably securing said removable dust collection module to said housing, said latching mechanism comprising:

(i) a latch member that can move from a first position in which, in use, it can engage part of the vacuum cleaner housing to a second position in which, in use, it is free from the vacuum cleaner housing; and

(ii) a release member that is movable, in use, relative to the latch member, the movement causing the latch member to move from its said first position to said second position.

2. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 1, wherein the latch member comprises an elongate member.

3. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 2, wherein the elongate latch member comprises a resilient biasing portion that provides a biasing force.

4. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 3, wherein the latch member further comprises two end housing engagement portions; and

wherein the end housing-engagement portions are urged way from each other by biasing force of the resilient portion.

6. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 3, wherein the release member can be moved relative to the latch member to provide a force acting against the biasing force of the biasing portion of the latch member to thereby release the dust collection module from the housing.

7. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 1, wherein the release member is moveable, in use, from a first release-member-position which it is in contact with the latch member, to a second release-member-position in which it is not in contact with the latch member; and

wherein the release member is movable relative to the latch member such that when the release member is in said first release-member-position where it is in contact with the latch member, then the latch member is in its second position in which it free from the said housing.

9. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 1, wherein the release member is provided with at lest one cam surface; and

wherein the latch member is provided with a corresponding cam surface.

11. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 9, wherein the cam surfaces can slide over each other to effect said movement of the latch member from its said first position to said second position.

12. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 9, wherein the release member comprises two cam surfaces, and the latch member comprises two end, housing-engagement portions, each of which is provided with a cam surface shaped to correspond with respective ones of the cam surface on the release member.

13. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 9, wherein said one cam surface on the release member is provided with a bearing, and said cam surface of the latch member is provided with a recess shaped to co-operate in a friction fit with said bearing.

16. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 1, wherein the latch member of the locking mechanism is at least partly contained within the dust collection module.

17. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 16, wherein said restriction of movement of the latch member relative to the dust collection module is effected by at least one inwardly directed flange that projects from an inwardly facing surface of the dust collection module.

20. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 9, further comprising a backing plate positioned so as to locate the release member between itself and the dust collection module; and

wherein the backing plate is positioned so as to provide a channel in which the release member can slide.

22. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 20, wherein the backing plate is at least partly contained within the dust collection module; and

wherein the latch member is contained within the dust collection module adjacent one surface thereof, and part of the backing plate is positioned substantially to prevent movement of the latch member further into the dust collection module.

24. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 22, wherein the latch member comprises an elongate member, and the release member is contained within the dust collection module so that it can move relative thereto in a direction that is substantially perpendicular to said latch member.

25. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 1, wherein:

the dust collection module comprises an air inlet;

the release member also acts as an air inlet closure member; and

movement of the release member relative to the latch member also moves the release member relative to the dust collection module and acts simultaneously to close a first air flow path into the dust collection module and open a second air flow path, that is remote from the first air flow path, into the dust collection module.

26. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 25, wherein:

the dust collection module comprises two air inlets;

the release member also acts as an air inlet closure shuttle member; and

whereby movement of the release member relative to the latch member causes the release member to slide relative to the dust collection module simultaneously to cover a first one of the air inlets of the dust collection module and open a second one of the air inlets of the dust collection module or vice versa.

27. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 1, wherein the dust collection module comprises two air inlets and the release member comprises a shuttle member containing first and second openings; and

whereby movement of the release member relative to the latch member causes the release member to move relative to said air inlets of the dust collection module so that in a first shuttle position the first, but not the second, air inlet of the dust collection module is in register with the first shuttle opening, and in a second shuttle position the second, but not the first, air inlet of the dust collection module is in register with the second shuttle opening.

28. (Amended) A vacuum cleaner according to claim 27, wherein the closure member can be moved relative to said air inlets so that in a first shuttle position the first air inlet of the dust collection module is in register with the first shuttle opening but the second air inlet of the dust collection module is not in register with either said shuttle opening, and in a second shuttle position the second air inlet of the dust collection module is in register with the second shuttle opening, but the first air inlet of the dust collection module is not in register with either said shuttle opening.

Please add the following new claims.

32. (New) A vacuum cleaner comprising:

a floor engaging housing;

a dust collection module removably supported by the housing and forming a portion of an airflow path through the housing;

a latch member operably associated with said dust collection module for securing said dust collection module to said housing such that said dust collection module cannot be removed from said housing; and

a release member movable into a first position, wherein the release member assists in forming a first airflow path into said dust collection module and engages said latch member to move said latch member into an unlocked position, whereby said dust collection module can be removed from said housing; and

said release member being movable from said first position to a second position, wherein said release member assists in forming a second airflow path, separate from said first airflow path, into said dust collection module and causes said latch member to be urged into a locked position, thereby preventing removal of said dust collection module from said housing.

33. (New) The vacuum cleaner of claim 32, wherein said latch member comprises a pair of end housing-engagement portions and a biasing element, said end housing-engagement portions engaging said housing when said release member is moved into said second position.

34. (New) The vacuum cleaner of claim 32, wherein movement of said release member from said first position into said second position causes said first airflow path to be obstructed; and

wherein movement of said release member from said release member from said second position into said first position causes said second airflow path to be obstructed.

35. (New) For a vacuum cleaner, a dust collection module adapted to be carried by a housing of the vacuum cleaner, said dust collection module comprising:

a dust bowl adapted to be placed in an opening in said housing;

a latch member carried by said dust bowl for engaging with a portion of said housing to hold said dust bowl secured to said housing; and

a release member movable slidably between a first position, wherein said release member engages said latch member to unlatch said dust bowl from said housing, whereby said dust bowl can be removed from said housing, and a second position wherein said release member allows said latch member to engage said housing, thereby preventing said dust bowl from being removed from said housing.

36. (New) The dust collection module of claim 35, wherein said latch member comprises a pair of end housing-engagement portions and a spring.

37. (New) The dust collection module of claim 35, wherein said release member assists in forming first and second spaced apart airflow paths into said dust bowl.

38. (New) The dust collection module of claim 37, wherein said second airflow path is obstructed by said release member when said release member is in said first position; and

wherein said first airflow path is obstructed by said release member when said release member is in said second position.

39. (New) A method for forming a vacuum cleaner, comprising:

providing a housing having an opening;

placing a dust collection module within said housing;

using a latch member to removably secure said dust collection module in said housing;

using a slidably moveable release member to automatically urge said latch into a locked position when said release member is in a first position, and to allow said latch to be released from locking engagement with said housing when said release member is moved into a second position.

40. (New) The method of claim 39, further comprising:

using said slidably moveable release member to provide a first airflow opening into said dust collection module when said member is in said first position, and a separate, second airflow opening into said dust collection module when said member is in said second position.

41. (New) The method of claim 40, further comprising:

using said slidably moveable release member to block said first airflow opening when said slidably moveable release member is in said second position, and to block said second airflow opening when said member is in said first position.

42. (New) The method of claim 40, further comprising disposing said slidable removable release member within said dust collection module.